

ANNUAL REPORT for the YEAR, 1907,
For the Urban Sanitary District of Downham Market.

POPULATION (Census 1901) 2473.

Gentlemen,

I beg to submit to you my Annual Report for the past year.

The area of the Urban District is 853 acres, the land falls gradually towards the western boundary formed by the St. John's Eau river, where it is little above the level of the Great Fen. The subsoils are chiefly sandstone in the upper parts of the district, and clay in the lower, where there is a stratum of kimmeridge clay.

The Population is remarkably settled, and has varied in the past very little from year to year, I estimate it to be about 2,500.

There is practically no over-crowding except in occasionally isolated instances; the occupations of the inhabitants are mostly commercial and agricultural, there being no large works or industries having particular influence or bearing on the public health. The house accommodation for the working classes is adequate, two or three houses which were unfit for habitation are now unoccupied, many old and insanitary dwellings have been so reconstructed as to render their condition good and sanitary. Great improvements have been made in a colony of houses on the Lynn Road and in Priory Road, in fact the whole sanitary condition of the houses of the working class has been much improved during the past few years.

At the beginning of the year 1907, the general health of the District was good, with the exception of a certain amount of Influenza, and indeed throughout nearly the whole year, the amount of disease has been small, and only 5 cases of notifiable infectious disease occurred, but unfortunately in December an epidemic of measles appeared, this spread like a wave from the direction of Wisbech, infecting the intervening fen district first, then West Downham and Station Road, and by the end of the year had spread all over the district and outlying parts. A great many children have contracted the disease, probably because it is a good many years since there was an epidemic of measles in the town, and so there are many children unprotected by previous attack.

The Elementary Schools had already closed when the epidemic became general, and those responsible for Sunday Schools also closed them for a time. I have advised the Norfolk Education Authority to have the Council Schools thoroughly cleaned and aired before reopening, which will be later than usual in the New Year. It is difficult to gauge the exact extent of an epidemic of Measles without making the disease notifiable, as in many cases no medical advice is sought; the parents regarding this complaint as of little account. Fortunately no fatal case occurred up to the end of the year.

Birth-rate There were 57 births registered in the District during the year; this is about the average for the last ten years, and rather more than the previous year. Of this number six were illegitimate.

Death-rate The total number of deaths registered was 66, the largest number for the last ten years, owing chiefly to many old persons, mostly non-residents, of the district, having died in the Workhouse; the death rate was thus 26·4 per 1000 not more than 46 of these deaths were “residents,” giving a death rate of 18·4 per 1000, a little above the average. 25 deaths occurred in the Workhouse during the year, for the most part of persons over 75 years of age.

Infant Mortality Nine infants died under one year of age, the same number as during the previous year, this gives an infantile mortality of 158 per 1000 births registered. Five of these infants were under a week in age at death, 2 from premature birth, 2 from congenital defects, and 1 from accidental overlying.

The Notification of Births Act, 1907, an adoptive Act, whereby every birth must be notified within 36 hours, would not in my opinion, serve any useful purpose in this District, the District being far too small to require it, or to justify the expense entailed.

Infectious Diseases There were not more than 5 cases of notifiable disease during the year. 1 of Enteric Fever, and 4 of Scarlet Fever, the latter were all of a mild type, 2 occurred in one house; all appear to have been contracted indirectly outside the district. Isolation at home and subsequent disinfection sufficed to prevent further spread of the disease.

Among causes of death during the year the following are the chief—

Heart disease	9	}	All of “Residents of the District.
Cancer	5		
Senile Decay	5		
Phthisis	4		
Pneumonia	3		

The Schools The sanitation and health of the children attending has been generally satisfactory. It now devolves upon the Local Education Authority, by section 13 of the Education Act, 1907, to arrange for the systematic medical inspection of school children. On December 30th, I advised that the Schools should remain closed for a further period of one month, owing to the prevalence of Measles.

Water Supply

The Water from the four public wells has not shown any sign of contamination when tested, and the supply has not been deficient. The laying of pipes to supply the town with Marham water is now going on apace, and very shortly our water supply should be as good as could be wished. A constant supply, under pressure, has been a long felt want in many parts of the town, and for many years was looked upon as only possible at so great an expense as to be prohibitive. This acquirement is a great step in our sanitary progress. To the dwellers in Bridge Street especially, where the existing water from shallow wells is unsatisfactory, it should prove a great convenience and safeguard. Water will now be available in case of fire, for which no provision has been possible in the past, and the instalment of hydrants at suitable distances is taking place.

Drainage.

At the present time it is not necessary to say much under this head. Your Council is the first to consider this question seriously in all its bearings, and to take definite steps towards an improvement in sewage disposal. Much has been done during the year to clear the way, and much remains yet to be done. During the summer, after various methods had been thoroughly considered, Messrs. Elliott & Brown, of Nottingham, prepared a scheme, aided in so far as we were able, by your Surveyor and myself, which was submitted to, and approved by your Council, and which now awaits the sanction of the Local Government Board. This scheme seems the best possible under existing circumstances, though probably some alterations in matters of detail and scope may be advisable when a further stage is reached, and when an opportunity for individual requirements and opinions to be considered will arise. It would be an effective remedy against the difficulties which have gradually arisen in connection with the existing want of definite system of treatment. In nearly all small communities of equal antiquity throughout the country, the same factors have rendered some alteration of sewage disposal imperative.

Disposal of House Refuse.

In this matter your Council have also taken in hand an important sanitary improvement, and by your decision to provide a public scavenger and suitable covered dust-cart, should do much to prevent accumulation in ash-pits causing nuisance and danger. Occupants of houses with ash-pits too closely adjoining, should provide themselves with covered receptacles which will be regularly emptied by the collector. This should facilitate the work of the Sanitary Inspector, who frequently, in the past, has had to complain of accumulation of offensive refuse.

Milk Supply.

This has given no cause for anxiety or complaint. Periodical inspections of the dairies, cow-sheds and milkshops have been made. The bye-laws adopted by the Council in 1899, framed upon the model bye-laws drafted by the Local Government Board have been observed, and deal adequately with cleaning lighting, ventilation, etc.

Factory and Workshop Act.

I have prepared the Return required by the Home Office, concerning Factories, Workshops and Home Work. Periodical inspections have been made of 32 Factories and Workshops which come under the Act, 10 Bake Offices, and the houses of 12 Out Workers; there has been no cause to suspend work in any of them, and no prosecution has been necessary.

Overleaf are appended Tables of Statistics.

Vital Statistics of Whole District during 1907 and previous Years.

Year.	Population estimated to middle of each Year.	Births.		Total Deaths registered in the District.				Total Deaths in Public Institutions of the District.	Deaths of non-residents registered in Public Institutions in the District.	Deaths of Residents regis- tered in Public Institu- tions beyond the District.	Nett Deaths at all ages belonging to the District.	
		Number.	Rate.	under 1 year.		At all Ages.						
				Number.	Rate per 1000 Births registered.	Number.	Rate.					
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	Number	Rate
13												
1897	2636	70	26.5	13	185	60	22.7	15	15	...	45	17.0
1898	2667	47	17.6	6	127	56	20.9	14	9	1	48	17.9
1899	2670	52	19.4	9	173	50	18.7	12	14	...	36	13.4
1900	2670	53	19.10	9	169	48	17.9	13	10	...	38	14.2
1901	2472	44	17.0	4	100	43	17.3	8	5	...	38	15.3
1902	2473	61	24.6	5	81	60	24.2	15	12	...	48	19.4
1903	2486	57	22.9	4	70	44	17.6	17	16	...	28	11.2
1904	2488	50	20.09	9	180	63	25.3	20	15	...	48	19.2
1905	2500	56	22.4	4	71	40	16	18	16	...	24	9.6
1906	2500	52	20.8	9	173	49	19.6	19	17	1	33	13.2
Averages for years 1897- 1906	2556.2	54.2	21.9	7.2	132.8	51.3	20	15.1	12.9	.2	40.2	15
1907	2500	57	22.8	9	158	66	26.4	25	21	1	46	18.4

Cases of Infectious Diseases notified during the Year 1907.

NOTIFIABLE DISEASES.	CASES NOTIFIED IN THE WHOLE DISTRICT.						
	At all ages.	At Ages—Years.					
		Under 1	1 to 5.	5 to 15.	15 to 25.	25 to 65.	65 and upwards.
Small-pox ... ..	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Cholera ... ..	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Diphtheria (including Membranous croup	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Erysipelas ... ..	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Scarlet fever	4	...	...	3	1	...	...
Typhus fever ... ..	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Enteric fever	1	...	...	1	...	...	...
Relapsing fever ... ..	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Continued fever ... ..	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Puerperal fever ... ..	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Plague ... ..	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Totals	5	...	...	4	1	...	...

Causes of, and Ages at, Death during Year 1907.

CAUSES OF DEATH. 1	Deaths at the subjoined ages of "Residents" whether occurring in or beyond the District.						
	All Ages. 2	Under 1 year 3	1 and under 5. 4	5 and under 15. 5	15 and under 25. 6	25 and under 65. 7	65 and upwards. 8
Enteric Fever	1	...	...	1	...	...	...
Epidemic influenza	2	...	...	...	...	...	2
Other septic diseases	1	...	...	...	...	...	1
Phthisis (Pulmonary Tuberculosis) ...	4	...	...	...	1	2	1
Other tubucular diseases	2	2	...	...	...	...	...
Cancer, malignant disease	5	...	...	...	...	4	1
Bronchitis	2	...	1	...	...	...	1
Pneumonia	3	...	...	...	...	1	2
Premature birth	2	2	...	...	...	...	...
Heart diseases	9	2	...	...	...	3	4
Accidents	2	...	1	...	...	1	...
Senile decay	5	...	...	...	...	...	5
Cerebral hemorrhage	2	...	...	...	...	...	2
All other causes	6	1	...	...	...	2	3
ALL CAUSES	46	7	2	1	1	13	22

Appended is a Summary from the Sanitary Inspector's Registers for the year.

Ash-pits caused to emptied—45
 Defective closet traps remedied—10
 Defective drains remedied—13
 New traps recommended—15
 New closets—10
 Dirty yards cleaned—11
 Stable manure—removal ordered—22
 Disinfection of private houses—2. etc., etc.

I should like to take this opportunity of again thanking the Sanitary Inspector and Surveyor for the cordial help they have given me in the various matters which have arisen in connection with the Public Health, in their different departments.

I am, Gentlemen,

Yours obediently,

E. GARNEYS WALES,

Medical Officer of Health.

To the Chairman and Members of
 The Downham Urban District Council,
 January 20th, 1908.

